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## PORTIONS OF FIRST ESDRAS AND NEHEMIAH IN THE SYRO-HEXAPLAR VERSION

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In the years 616 and 617 A. D., Paul of Tellā made at Alexandria his Syriac translation of the old Greek version of the Old Testament. The Greek text which he translated was one of great historical importance, namely, that which constituted the "Septuagint" column in Origen's *Hexapla*. It is quite possible that the *Hexapla* itself was in existence at that time (presumably at Caesarea); but, however that may be, it is pretty certain that old manuscripts transcribed directly from the original—and some of them doubtless collated again with it, to insure the greatest possible accuracy—were to be had in Alexandria. One or more of these supposedly faithful copies formed the basis of Paul's labors. His rendering was a closely literal one, and its characteristics are now pretty well known.<sup>1</sup> Every part of the Greek is reproduced as exactly as possible, and in such a uniform and self-consistent manner as to render this translation very easily recognizable, wherever specimens of it are found.

The history of the manuscript transmission of this "Syro-Hexaplar" version is a comparatively brief one, as might have been expected. Although often copied, at least in part, it was not as generally or as carefully preserved as the Peshitto. A number of manuscripts containing longer or shorter portions of it are now known to be extant. Of these, the most important by far is the great Milan codex, published in fac-simile by Ceriani in 1874 (*Codex Syro-Hexaplaris*; published as Vol. VII of his *Monumenta sacra et profana*). This contains the translation of the second half of the Greek Bible; a twin codex containing the first half, and no doubt originally forming the first volume of this same manuscript, was in existence as late as the sixteenth century, when it was in the possession of Andreas Du Maes (Masius) of Amsterdam. As is well known, it has since then mysteriously disappeared. The Maes codex was a torso, to be sure, lacking

<sup>1</sup> See the account of this version in Swete's *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, pp. 112-14, and the literature cited on p. 116.



also that he—in agreement with the church tradition—believed it to have the right of priority over the form adopted in the Jewish canon. And Origen was certainly not ignorant of the fact, so widely ignored in modern times, that “I Esdras” is nothing else than a very respectable translation of a Hebrew-Aramaic version of the Ezra history.

The status of “Second Esdras” in the *Hexapla* and in Paul’s translation cannot be demonstrated absolutely, with the evidence now available, though a tolerable degree of certainty can be reached. No Hexaplar text of the canonical Ezra, whether Greek or Syriac, is known to be in existence. The only such text of Nehemiah now recognized is the one which is published in the following pages. In the table of contents of the lost Maes manuscript stood simply “Ezra ;”<sup>2</sup> according to recognized usage this might mean (1) the apocryphal Ezra, or (2) the canonical Ezra, or (3) both together, or (4) the combination of one or both of them with Nehemiah. It has already been shown that the apocryphal Ezra (I Esdras) stood in the Syro-Hexaplar translation, and the text printed below shows that Nehemiah was also included there. The “Ezra” of the Maes codex therefore undoubtedly stood for these two books, at least. It is unfortunate that Maes, in making his extracts for the *Peculium syrorum* (in the Antwerp Polyglot) and for the Amsterdam edition of the *Critici sacri*, should have left Chronicles and Ezra untouched, although excerpting systematically every other book contained in his manuscript!<sup>3</sup>

It is not to be doubted, finally, that the Syro-Hexaplar version—and therefore the Maes codex—contained the canonical Ezra, as the first part of “Second Esdras.” If the Greek version of our canonical book (and therefore, of course, of Chronicles and Nehemiah as well) is that of Theodotion, as there are good grounds for believing,<sup>4</sup> and as not a few eminent scholars, from Grotius (1644) onward, have contended, it nevertheless certainly was not apportioned to him, nor even in any way designated as his, in Origen’s work. No one can seriously doubt, in view of all

<sup>2</sup> See Rahlfs, in Lagarde’s *Bibliothecae syriacae quae ad philologiam sacram pertinent*, pp. 32<sup>s</sup> sq.

<sup>3</sup> Rahlfs, *ibid.*, pp. 19 sq.

<sup>4</sup> I hope to return to this question in another place. See the very interesting and acute observations of Sir Henry Howorth, printed in the *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology*, May and November, 1901; June and November, 1902; and his collection of the external evidence.













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